



# Integrating gender into rural advisory services

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## Introduction

A profound need exists for specific guidelines for integrating gender into rural advisory services. Acknowledgement of the significant function women serve in agricultural development around the world has not always rendered effective ways of working with women farmers. In many countries, women make up over 70% of the agricultural labour. Women participate along the entire agricultural value chain, contributing as producers, distributors, processors, storers and marketers, as well as being responsible for feeding and caring for their families. Women and men assume different roles in society and therefore often have unique needs. The World Bank, FAO and IFAD (2009 p. 2) state that the “failure to recognize the roles, differences and inequalities [between men and women] poses a serious threat to the effectiveness of the agricultural development agenda”.

Integration of gender principles and practices into rural advisory services is critical for increasing productivity in both rural sectors and the national economy and for providing adequate and appropriate services for both women and men. The analysis and incorporation of gender issues is rarely included in rural advisory services. Yet, women as the primary agricultural labour force throughout the world, perform agricultural tasks with fewer resources, less access to technology and the added responsibility of child and family oversight. The vast majority of rural advisory service workers are male, and are not trained in how to work with women farmers. Few recognize the contributions that women make to agriculture or are aware of how best to

serve this population’s needs. As extension and other development organizations and agencies remain a significant resource of information for limited resource farmers, (the majority of whom are women), the inclusion of methods and approaches that address gender is critical for the continued success of rural advisory services.

Taking gender into account usually, but not always, involves a focus on women since women most often occupy a subordinate position in society or are the most marginalized in their communities. Women have traditionally held lower status than men in most countries around the world. Experience has shown that sustainable changes are most fully realized through activities focused on engaging both men and women to transform harmful attitudes and behaviours. This is because men can also be disadvantaged due to their sex and their related gender roles. For instance, young boys in southern Africa are taken out of school at certain times of the year due to animal herding responsibilities. In cases where there is societal pressure for men to be aggressive and dominant, such male gender norms may negatively impact women, families and communities by encouraging violence against women. Thus, even programs that primarily focus on women should also work with men to transform harmful attitudes and behaviours. A program that promotes women’s economic empowerment should consider whether there are societal expectations for men to be the sole provider in their families; if so, men may feel disempowered by such a program, and domestic violence could be an unintended consequence.

Recognizing factors that promote gender equality is essential when planning and implementing agricultural programming for both men and women farmers. The strategy and plan of action of the International Livestock Research Institute to mainstream gender into its work acknowledges that gender equality is an important prerequisite for agricultural growth and sustainable development. Promoting equality of opportunity and outcomes between women and men in the livestock sector at local, national, regional and global levels is a major objective for the institute.

## Integrating gender into rural advisory services: A participatory workshop approach

One method for promoting gender equality is to provide training and instruction for rural advisory service workers on ways to integrate gender into their work. Two workshops were conducted that focused on methods for gender integration. The workshops took place on 6–8 June 2012 at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda and 14–16 June 2012 at Sokoine University of Agriculture, in Morogoro, Tanzania and involved 26 and 30 participants, respectively. The majority of participants were male field extension agents, with attendance also by university faculty and partner organizations. The primary objectives of the workshop were to:

- Differentiate between sex and gender and analyze connections among gender, agricultural productivity and rural advisory services.
- Identify the main elements of gender analysis, review basic tools for conducting a gender analysis and assess when and how to apply these tools in the field using participatory techniques.
- Examine critical issues affecting work with women farmers, including gender-sensitive message design and communication strategies.
- Compare or contrast participatory techniques to engage mixed and single-gender groups.
- Define the key elements of an agricultural value chain using a gendered approach.

The workshops embraced and incorporated participatory and capacity-building facilitation methods to assist rural advisory service workers to become more effective and capable in their work with women and men farmers. A participatory approach encourages openness to new ideas and techniques, nurtures a creative, appreciative spirit, recognizes the value of traditional knowledge and promotes a willingness to share and apply the skills and knowledge experienced in the workshop setting. Capacity-building activities enable workshop participants to build and strengthen their individual and collective abilities as they work in the field to facilitate lasting change. Increasing the longevity and meaningful output of the workshops through participatory, capacity-building activities is crucial for ensuring continued progress toward gender equality.



## Rationale for the workshops

Women, on average, comprise 43% of the agricultural labour force in developing countries and account for an estimated two-thirds of the world's 600 million poor livestock keepers. Of those women in the least developed countries who report being economically active, 79% report agriculture as their primary course of livelihood (48% of economically active women worldwide).

Rural women typically work longer hours than men, when one takes into account both paid productive and unpaid reproductive or domestic and care responsibilities.

When these tasks are taken into account, women's total work hours are longer than men's in all regions. Women tend to be employed for labour-intensive tasks, generally earn lower wages than men and are more likely to be paid at piece rate (Farming First 2013).

## Participant reactions to workshops

Participant reactions to the gender workshops were overwhelmingly positive and enthusiastic. The participants were very interested in and appreciative of the participatory, hands-on methodology demonstrated throughout the workshop. Many commented that they had never received any training of this nature where they could be actively engaged and involved in practising skills and knowledge. The participants expressed how the workshop had both a personal and professional impact. The methodology and subject matter resonated deeply as they contemplated ways to integrate gender more effectively in their work.

Before the start of the workshop, pre-evaluation forms were issued to assess general knowledge about gender. At the end of each workshop participants were asked to complete a post evaluation form. The evaluation forms consisted of 15 items rated on a four-point scale ranging from 0 ('Not at all') to 3 ('To a great extent'). Scores could range from 0 to 45. Pre-evaluation scores ranged from 7 to 37. Post-evaluation scores ranged from 34 to 45.



On average, the percentage change in the participants' self-reported knowledge was an increase of 87%. The items that showed the least change between pre- and post-evaluations were related to 'differentiating between sex and gender' and 'explaining the concept of gender mainstreaming'. 'Applying a specific gender analysis tool' showed the highest percentage change (214%) between pre- and post-evaluation measurements. Reasons for these changes varied by individual, but the majority of participants had never attended any training on integrating gender into their work.

## Next steps

At the conclusion of the training, participants reflected on what questions remained as they began to apply and implement the skills and knowledge gained in the workshops:

- How can we simplify the training for the grassroots level, while at the same time retain the key concepts?
- How do we talk with, for example, a traditional Muslim male to help him consider incorporating females into the discussion and decision-making?

Gender constraints significantly reduce the productivity of both the rural sector and entire national economies. Misunderstanding of gender differences leads to inadequate planning and design of projects and the perpetu-

ation of gender inequalities and diminished returns on investments. Addressing gender equality requires a commitment to providing adequate training for rural advisory service workers as they continue to assist both women and men in the field.

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## Key concepts stressed in the workshop

Sex is the biological difference between men and women. Sexual differences are concerned with men's and women's bodies. Sexual differences are the same throughout the human race.

Gender refers to the socially given attributes, roles, activities and responsibilities connected to being a female or a male in a given society. These are learned, changeable over time and have wide variations within and between cultures and should be analyzed with other socio-economic variables.

Gender analysis is a process that makes visible the varied roles women, men, girls and boys play in the family, in the community, and in economic, legal and political structures. Gender analysis looks at how power relations within the household inter-relate with those at community, market, national or international level by asking the following questions:

- Who does what, when, where and for how long?
- Who has access to resources (land, equipment, capital etc.)?
- Who has access to benefits (education, health services, political power etc.)?
- Who has control over resources and benefits?

Gender mainstreaming is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of both women and men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality.

Gender analysis tools and techniques:

- collect and organize information about gender division of labour
- make women's work visible
- distinguish between access and control
- provide a gender-neutral entry point for discussions on gender issues
- challenge unequal gender relations
- support the empowerment of women
- recognize institutional and political resistance to transforming gender relations
- alert planners to the inter-relationship between productive, reproductive and community work.
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Steps for integrating gender into agricultural value chains:

- Map gender relations and roles along the value chain by identifying who does what and who benefits.
- Identify gender-based constraints by identifying factors that cause gender disparity.
- Assess consequences of the constraints and prioritize actions to address the constraints.
- Act on prioritized constraints; address the simplest first.
- Monitor and evaluate success of actions



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February 2013